

Members

Rep. Markt Lytle, Chair
Rep. Robert Cherry
Rep. John Frenz
Rep. William Friend
Rep. Scott Mellinger
Rep. Jeff Thompson
Sen. Robert Jackman, Vice-Chair
Sen. Sue Landske
Sen. Connie Lawson
Sen. James Lewis
Sen. Katie Wolf
Sen. Richard Young



INTERIM STUDY COMMITTEE ON RURAL AND AGRICULTURAL ISSUES

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Authority: Legislative Council Resolution 00-1
(Adopted May 25, 2000)

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MEETING MINUTES¹

Meeting Date: August 2, 2000
Meeting Time: 10:30 A.M.
Meeting Place: State House, 200 W. Washington St.,
Room 233
Meeting City: Indianapolis, Indiana
Meeting Number: 1

Members Present: Rep. Markt Lytle, Chair; Rep. John Frenz; Rep. Scott Mellinger; Rep. Robert Cherry; Rep. Jeff Thompson; Sen. Robert Jackman, Vice-Chair; Sen. Richard Young; Sen. Katie Wolf; Sen. James Lewis.

Members Absent: Rep. William Friend; Sen. Sue Landske; Sen. Connie Lawson.

I. Call to Order

Representative Markt Lytle, the Committee's chair, called the meeting to order at approximately 10:30 a.m. The Chair announced that today's business would entail agenda-setting for future meetings and that he intended to hold meetings outside of the State House. The Chair suggested Jennings County and Madison County as potential meeting sites.

Committee Discussion

The Chair then solicited ideas for additional topics from Committee members. Senator Jackman expressed concern that there was not a clear plan in last session's tobacco settlement legislation to ensure that funds will be distributed to tobacco farmers. Chairman Lytle agreed and stated that he, along with Senator Lewis and others, have met with officials from the Governor's office on this topic. He added that this meeting included touring tobacco barns, facilities developing alternative crops, and a processing/marketing center in Scottsburg.

Senator Young acknowledged that issues regarding a safety net system for Indiana's family farmers were very complex and also noted the importance of the loss of agricultural land to development. Representative Cherry added that inconsistent enforcement of farm truck

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regulations is impacting citizens with various interests, including those in the farm machinery business and auctioneers. Legislative Services Agency (LSA) staff also reported a topic suggested by Representative Friend concerning incentives for financial institutions to maintain branch operations in rural communities.

Public Comments

Chairman Lytle then called for public comments on possible agenda items. Donna Marsh, speaking for People for Choice, urged the Committee to draft legislation concerning water and sewer districts as opposed to simply reporting on the topic.

Francis Bradley of the Campaign for Economic Justice asked the Committee to consider examining the problems of income inequality for family farmers (see Exhibit A). James Benham, President of the Indiana Tobacco Growers Association, Inc., put forth the idea of pursuing a voucher system to help tobacco farmers. Mr. Benham also spoke of creating cooperatives and transitioning farmers into growing alternative crops as means of ameliorating the tobacco farmers' situation (see Exhibit B).

Paul Anderson, a farmer from Ripley County, spoke about the changing market structures in agriculture and the need for states to adopt legislation enabling marketing and bargaining alliances. Jim Hoyer spoke on behalf of the Citizens Action Coalition and the Campaign for Economic Justice and suggested that Indiana's Attorney General aggressively pursue anti-trust action against large agribusiness-business firms (see Exhibit C). Bob Kraft of the Indiana Farm Bureau remarked that the fund established in this past session's tobacco legislation is itself unfunded. He also expressed concern over the future of agricultural property assessment in Indiana.

Several individuals then addressed water and sewer district issues. John R. Holmes, Executive Director of the Indiana Water and Wastewater Association, offered assistance to the Committee and stated that his organization represents over 450 small utilities, including municipalities, not-for-profits, and conservation areas. Lynn Dennis of the Nature Conservancy referred the Committee to a study of the Blue River District for use in future discussions on this topic. Ivan Wagner of Madison County also briefly spoke on the need for information-sharing and effective channels for disseminating news related to water and sewer districts.

Paul Capovali then addressed HR 100-2000 (one of the charges assigned to the Committee by the Legislative Council). Mr. Capovali explained that his business has installed mailboxes in over 800 subdivisions in Indiana, and that his employees have struck gas lines when attempting to place mailboxes in accordance with federal postal regulations. He offered to show Committee members an example of this problem with buried utilities at a future meeting.

Representative Thompson noted concern over right-of-way issues with respect to the water and sewer district discussion, and also mentioned that some constituents of his had experienced problems with cable companies disturbing property while accessing right-of-ways but not restoring this property to its previous condition.

Chairman Lytle thanked all present for their suggestions and stated that all of these topics would be considered for future agenda items. There being no further discussion, the Chair then announced that the next meeting would be in Jennings County and asked LSA staff to schedule a convenient date and meeting place. The meeting was adjourned at approximately 12:15 p.m.

Note: At the request of the Chair, a letter from the Indiana Farmers Union regarding an upcoming conference will be attached to these minutes.